Alfred Helliwell





Rank: - Air Mechanic 1st Class (Observer) formerly Duke of Wellington's 3/9354

Number: - 62797

Regiment: - Royal Air Force 106th Squadron

Died during flying training: - 6th September 1918 aged 27 years

Cemetery: - Arneke British Cemetery, Nord, France. V111.A.20

"SLEEP ON DEAR SON THE BATTLE IS FOUGHT THE VICTORY WON MOTHER"

Batley News, 28 Sep 1918 (photo)

Family Details

Alfred was born in Fryston near Castleford in c.1891 the son of Hunslet born Sam Helliwell and his wife Rachel (nee Robinson) who was born in Millgate, Bacup, Lancashire. The couple had married at St. John the Baptist Church, Halifax on 18th November 1878 and their first child, Edwin, was born in Castleford in 1879 although by 1881 they were living in Burnley. Sam was a miner so probably moved about looking for work.

Their next two children, Edith (1880) and James (1882) were born in Manchester. The family then moved to Hebden Bridge where the family was increased by Emily (1884), Ellen (1886) and Frank (1888), then to Fryston near Castleford before the birth of Alfred (1891-1918).They moved to Batley before the birth of Sarah (1894), John (1895) and twins Minnie and Lilly (1899) were born at Batley.

Alfred attended Carlinghow Council School and Up Lane Sunday School later being employed by Batley Co-operative Society as a lorry driver. He was a member of Batley Working Men's Club.

When the family arrived in Batley they lived at 10, Coal Pit Lane, Carlinghow before moving to 2, Tillotson Street, Cross Bank. It would appear Sam continued to move about and died at Sedgefield, Co Durham in 1906. James followed his father to be a miner but the other three boys worked in the mills. In 1911 Rachel was living in a 4 roomed house at 2, Tillotson Street with six of her eleven children.

Service Details

Alfred enlisted in the militia on the 4th February 1909 for six years. He joined the West Riding Regiment giving his town of birth as Pontefract. He was 5ft. 2inches tall, weighing 111lbs. with grey eyes and brown hair. He went for training each year and his six years had expired just before war broke out in 1914. He was embodied on the 8th August and disembarked on the 24th November 1914 and joined the Duke of Wellington's on 2nd December 1914.

He was gassed at Hill 60 on the 6th May 1915 and was sent to Rouen until late May not rejoining his battalion until 26th June 1915. On the 13th August that year he was sent to a Casualty Clearing Station and then to Rouen, with a nervous

disability. He rejoined his battalion in the field on 10th November 1915 but he was not fit and was sent back to Rouen in January 1916 finally being sent to England for discharge on 28th January 1916.

Alfred re-enlisted in 1917 under the Military Service Act into the Royal Air Force and had been in France almost a year when his mother received a letter telling her of an accident.

A Major wrote: - "*Your son was killed in a flying accident yesterday (Sept.6th). He was killed almost instantly. Your son was attached to this squadron for training, the flying part of which commenced a week ago. It is very hard luck his new vocation should have been cut short so soon."*

Official news later came to say he had died at 62nd Casualty Clearing Station of a fractured skull.

His brother, John, died of wounds 18th December 1917 and his brothers Sapper Edward Helliwell and Sergeant George Helliwell were both in France at the time of his death.

He was awarded the 1914-15 Star, British War Medal and the Victory Medal.

He is remembered with Honour at Up Lane Sunday School, Batley Working Men's Club, Batley Co-operative Society's Roll of Honour and Batley Cemetery.



Researched by members of
Batley History Group